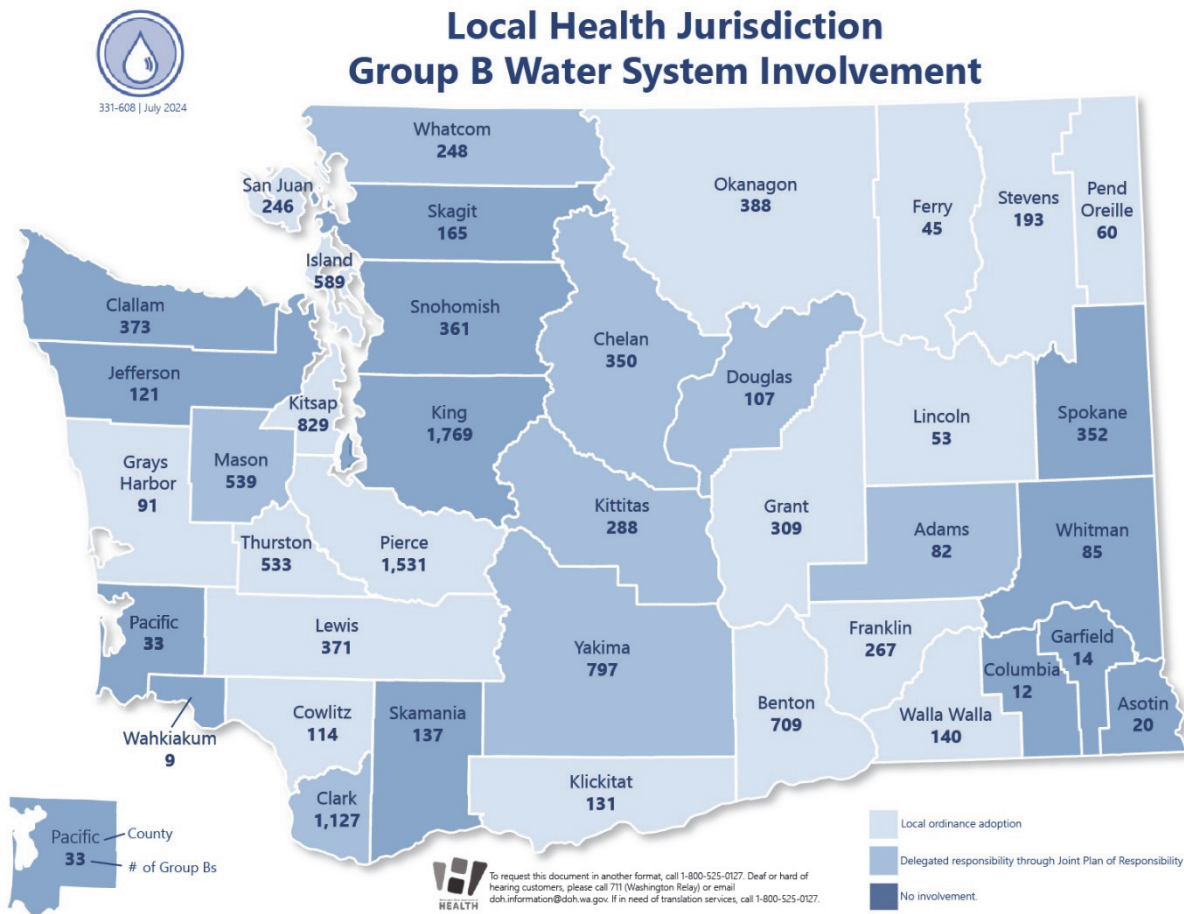




331-555 Group B Drinking Water Program

331-555 • 7/31/2024

Group B public water systems serve fewer than 15 connections and fewer than 25 people. At present, 13,588 Group B water systems provide drinking water to 2 percent of the state’s population. They are not subject to the requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. As such, regulating these systems has always been a challenge for us. Historically, to implement the Group B Program, we relied on working partnerships with local health jurisdictions (LHJs). (Inset map of publication [331-608](#).)



History

From 1995 through 2013, State Board of Health (SBOH) rules provided a way for applicants to obtain approval for a new or expanding Group B public water system that required treatment for a health-based drinking water contaminant. Under these rules, LHJs had several options for participating in Group B oversight.

- Create a local ordinance at least as stringent as the Board Rules.
- Implement the Board Rules through delegated authority from us.

- ◆ Provide technical assistance to Group B applicants and owners without any regulatory responsibility.

On January 1, 2014, a new Group B Rule went into effect. The new SBOH rule adopts higher standards for new system approval but eliminates almost all on-going regulation of Group B systems.

Twenty-Six of Thirty-Nine Counties Oversee Group B Systems

Of Washington's 13,588 active Group B water systems, 10,222 (75 percent) are in counties where LHJs adopted a local ordinance or where LHJs delegated authority from us for Group B oversight.

Legislation Changing the Group B Program

In the tight fiscal climate of 2009, the legislature ended all state funding to the Group B Program and revised the enabling legislation. It excluded a requirement for the Group B Rule to address ongoing requirements, such as water sampling. It also directed the SBOH to adopt the following

- ◆ The rule must address at least the initial design and construction of a Group B water system.
- ◆ LHJs can establish a local ordinance that's at least as stringent as the state rule.
- ◆ The state rule may eliminate some or all regulatory requirements for Group B systems that serve fewer than five connections.

We worked with the SBOH and stakeholders to develop a fee-supported rule that meets the Legislature's direction and protects public health. The SBOH unanimously approved the new rule in October 2012. Founded on three principles, the new rule went into effect January 1, 2014.

1. Strong design standards using low risk sources to ensure safe, long-lasting facilities.
2. Provide a local option for Group B public water system oversight.
3. Educate and empower owners, consumers and designers to follow best public health practices without force of rule.

Group B Resources

We developed several [Group B Public Water Systems](#) online tools.

- ◆ **Emergency Response:** Resources to support Group B water systems during drinking water emergencies or when developing emergency response plans, including emergency contact numbers and actions recommended to protect water system customers.
- ◆ **Group B system design and planning:** Provides information on Group B system requirements, guidance to assist with system expansion, design guidelines, forms, templates, and other resources.
- ◆ **Group B system Operations and Maintenance:** Guidance to help owners and operators maintain and operate Group B water systems.
- ◆ **Information for consumers, operators and owners:** General information on Group B water systems and links to resources you can use to keep yourself and your household healthy.

For More Information

Our publications are online at [Drinking Water Publications and Forms](#).

Contact our nearest regional office from 8 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday. If you have an after-hours emergency, call 877-481-4901.

[Eastern Region](#), Spokane Valley 509-329-2100.

[Northwest Region](#), Kent 253-395-6750.

[Southwest Region](#), Tumwater 360-236-3030.



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